

Chapter 7

The New Offensive: The ANC after 1949

The adoption of the Programme of Action at the 1949 conference of the ANC marked the beginning of a new era. It was a great shift from the defensive position which had previously characterised the struggle for national liberation. For years the ANC had merely reacted to government legislation which was designed to seal off the Africans from the body politic. A change of gears took place as the struggle moved into the offensive, first building up the mass support of the oppressed people and then throwing their weight behind a series of actions that forced the Nationalist government onto the defensive. While carrying out relentlessly its programme of apartheid, the government could not predict with any measure of certainty what those engaged in the struggle for liberation were going to do.

Typical of a regime inspired by fascist ideas and practices, the government opened its programme of trampling human rights underfoot by passing the Suppression of Communism Act in 1950. The Act, which was purportedly intended to crush Communism, carried clauses of a sweeping nature that destroyed everybody's right to free association and expression. It was the realisation of this fact which induced the ANC to share the platform jointly with the Communist Party on May Day 1950 to protest against the Suppression of Communism Bill, which parliament duly passed into law. During the course of protests in various parts of the Reef, the police killed eighteen Africans and wounded many others.

After the May Day killings, the National Executive Committee of the ANC held a series of meetings to discuss and decide on the form protest would take against the brutal murder of defenceless workers. The NEC called for a stay-at-home for 26 June 1950. After the 26 June 1951 observance of Freedom Day, it was recommended that a campaign be launched jointly by Africans in the ANC, together with Coloureds in the South African Coloured People's Organisation and Indians in the Indian Congress. Consequently a Joint Planning Council, consisting of Dr J. S. Moroka, Walter Sisulu (President-General and Secretary-General respectively of the ANC), J. B. Marks of the ANC, and Dr Yusuf Dadoo and Yusuf Cachalia of the Indian Congress, recommended that a Defiance Campaign be launched against unjust laws on 26 June 1952.

The Defiance Campaign was a significant watershed, which saw 8 326 people volunteering to defy unjust laws and thus court imprisonment. The liberation struggle derived several benefits from the Defiance Campaign. Firstly, it gave an opportunity to the rank and file of the ANC membership to be involved in a practical way in the struggle against oppression. The Campaign unleashed the pent-up energy of the people and inspired them with a desire to join the ANC to fight against oppression. The membership rocketed from 4000 to 100 000 within months. Secondly, the people shed the fear of jail as they realised that the way to freedom passed through jail. Further, imprisonment lost the moral stigma that had been attached to those who had been jailed for whatever reason. Thirdly, the campaign inculcated the idea and spirit of sacrifice of personal interest for the public good. Fourthly, out of the campaign came a disciplined volunteer corps of men and women who gave unstintingly of their time and energy, by day or night, without any remuneration in order to build and strengthen the ANC. And finally, the Defiance Campaign put an end to the era of deputation's to and pleading with the government to grant rights which it had deliberately, as a matter of calculated policy, taken away from the oppressed and exploited majority.

Verwoerd Against the Tide of History

At the beginning of the fifties, the Nationalist government began unfolding its sinister plans to implement apartheid. To conceive and carry out a plan of this nature, of such magnitude, one that, to all appearances, was impossible to execute, required ideologues of exceptional ability, albeit with sick minds, to make so many people, especially the whites in South Africa and the leading imperialist governments in Western Europe and North America, believe that the evil they were perpetrating was morally right. Here was a plan that was painstakingly designed to wipe out millions of people by subjecting them to a slow death by starvation, so that the Afrikaner could live out his life in peace without fear of the swart gevaar, the 'Bantu'.

It was Hendrik F. Verwoerd as Minister of Native Affairs and later as Prime Minister, with the assistance of W. W. M. Eiselen as his Secretary for Native Affairs, who developed the ideology of apartheid and pursued it with the consistent logic that utterly destroyed Jan Smuts's United Party with its policy of segregation and trusteeship. With the perpetual smile of a sadist who enjoys inflicting pain, he used the state machinery - the civil service, the army and the police - and harnessed the NGK as well, ensuring that the main body of the Church would close its eyes to the excesses of apartheid, and business would share in the spoils of apartheid. He did these things in the name of, and in order to save, Western Christian civilisation.

With a few well-calculated moves, he aimed at achieving complete control of the life and thinking of the Africans. The institutions which previous governments had

established to provide a platform for the airing of the grievances of Africans he found unacceptable. His view of local councils like the Bunga for the reserves, Advisory Boards for the urban areas and the Natives Representative Council was that these provided platforms for liberal ideas. They had to go to make room for a structure that would tighten control over the lives of the Africans.

In contrast with the indirect rule of the British government in its colonies in West and Central Africa, under the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 the Nationalist government revived chieftainship, which had been utterly crushed and destroyed after the Wars of Dispossession. Verwoerd drew a picture of chieftainship restored to its ancient glory before the arrival of the white man, and assured putative chiefs that the government would empower them with authority that was theirs by divine right to rule over their people. To show how serious the government was, it immediately appointed a large number of recognised chiefs, and raised their stipends to levels undreamt of before. As heads of Bantu Authorities they were given free rein under the protection of the police to gather a rich harvest from peasants. Secondly, the government drew in the chiefs as 'baas boys, to implement apartheid under the direct command of the local Native Commissioner in his dual capacity as the field representative of the National Party and as an officer of the apartheid judiciary working hand in hand with the police. The chief tried and convicted in bush courts those who fell foul of the manifold apartheid regulations and was even given powers to banish people. Originally only the Governor-General had enjoyed that power in terms of the Native-Administration Act. Among the many who were banished at the height of the resistance to the Bantu Authorities Act were Chiefs Msutu, Moroa Mose and Godfrey Sekukune who were sent to Vryburg, Cala and Zululand respectively. Appeal could only be had to the Native Commissioner's Court, where the police officer, who also enforced the law on the ground, was the prosecutor.

The government allowed the chiefs to spread their tentacles to the urban areas, where they appointed representatives with the job of taking up matters affecting tribal members and especially migrant labourers working in the main industrial areas. The role of the urban representative was to persuade his tribal compatriots to look to the chief in the reserves rather than concern himself with urban issues.

With the introduction of influx control and the labour bureau system, the Native Commissioner delegated his power to the chief to select workseekers for contract labour. This opened the gates for widespread bribery and corruption. In a situation where there was an inexhaustible supply of labour, the chief's hands could be greased. He took money from those whom he recommended for a job under contract, as well as from those whom he promised to place at the head of the queue for the next call-up for contract labour. Even though the chiefs were by and large illiterate they were placed at the head of school committees and took

instructions from the Native Commissioners on how the schools should be run. The teachers had to carry out the chiefs, instructions or lose their jobs.

Clear Statement of Policy

When the National Party came to power it re-examined the Native policy that had been formulated by previous governments and tailored it to fit the racist plans of apartheid. The new package of legislation comprised the Bantu Authorities Act, the Bantu Education Act, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the pass laws and influx control regulations, and the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act.

Let us here examine the policy statements made by Verwoerd when he introduced the Bantu Education Bill in 1953¹ and when he addressed the Senate on the government's Native policy in 1954.² The government decision to take over the control of African education coincided with a demand by African Teachers, Associations for a transfer of the control of African education to the Union Department of Education. The teachers' demand arose from expectations that if African education fell under the Department of Education it would be financed better than was the case under the joint control of the missionaries and the provincial administrations, and that conditions of service would also improve. Verwoerd, on the other hand, wanted it transferred, but for different reasons, to the Department of Native Affairs of which he was Minister.

He stated that as the aim of Bantu education was to improve race relations, its control should be transferred to the Department of Native Affairs, which had contact with the Bantu. Racial relations could not 'improve if the Bantu are trained for professions which are not open to them'. He argued that race relations cannot exist when education is under the control of people who believe in equality. Such a person will create in the Bantu expectations which clash with the possibilities in this country. He emphasised that it was a fundamental educational principle that 'Education must train and teach people in accordance with their opportunities in life ... What was the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics which it could not use in life? According to Verwoerd it was important that 'their education should not clash with government policy,.

In a subsequent statement of policy, Verwoerd set out in a notoriously clear manner how he intended to use the school to poison and paralyse on a mass scale the minds of teachers and schoolchildren so that they would accept their position as perpetual serfs in the service of the white man. In all his pronouncements he sought to put to the fore the 'Bantu community,. He was concerned that the product of the school should not aspire to rise above certain forms of menial labour as prescribed by apartheid nor should the child seek to rise above his community. He saw the role of the African teacher in this way: 'The Bantu teacher must be

utilised as an active factor in the process of development of the Bantu community to serve his community and build it up and learn not to feel above his community so that he wants to be integrated into the life of the European community, and becomes frustrated and rebellious when this does not happen and tries to make the community dissatisfied because of such misdirected and alien ambitions.

He set out to destroy utterly any values the African had learnt to cherish from an educational system that had inculcated in him free and independent thinking. He condemned a system of education which produced a `class [of Natives] which has learned that it is above its own people and feels that its spiritual, economic and political home is among the civilised community of South Africa, namely the Europeans`. Again, `The Bantu must be guided to serve in his own community ... There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ... Up till now he has been subjected to a school system which ... practically misled him by showing him the green pastures of the European but still did not allow him to graze there.

From the strict implementation of apartheid, as conceived and shaped by Verwoerd, emerged features which turned out to the advantage of the national liberation struggle led by the ANC. Guided by his hatred of Africans, he made the serious mistake of examining what he intended to be the solution of the white man`s problem - `die swart gevaar` - only from one angle. He did not stop to consider how such plans would impact on the African ability to resist them. His most serious mistake was to regard and treat all Africans as an undifferentiated mass that had all to be swept to the reserves, to be subjected to pass laws and influx control regulations, to live in the locations in rented houses, denied any opportunity ever to invest in landed property. The government dismissed the appeals of the Liberal Party to create an African middle class with corresponding rights and privileges as sickening liberal ideas that would make the African aspire to the life of Europeans. There was no escape for any African from the dragnet of apartheid laws. These conditions applied equally to the unskilled and often illiterate worker, the medical doctor, the lawyer, the teacher, the professional categories of all sorts, the business people and ministers of religion. This lack of security resulted in the professional people withdrawing from participation in the activities of a political organisation like the ANC. In most anti-colonial struggles for independence, the middle class and the national bourgeoisie, where it had developed, led the struggle for independence. This was not to be the case in South Africa.

When the government started in earnest to implement the influx control regulations and the other repressive measures it had placed on the statute book in the early 1950s, these had far-reaching effects on the social makeup of the ANC leadership and membership. For many years since its establishment in 1912, the ANC had depended to a significant extent on African intellectuals, middle-class

businessmen, and white-collar employees of various categories, both for the general membership and for its leadership at all levels. The implementation of influx control regulations and the battery of other laws that placed these groups at the mercy of the whims of white government officials deeply threatened the livelihood of these sections of the African people. They therefore started gradually to retreat from political activism. As large numbers of them withdrew from resistance politics, the character of both the membership and leadership of the ANC started also to change. By the end of the 1950s the great majority of the ANC membership was drawn from the urban working class. These also provided a large component of the ANC leadership at branch, regional and even provincial level. The few intellectuals, professionals and middle-class people who continued to play an important role were to be found at the national level, in the National Executive Committee. These, however, were elected on the basis of their proven leadership record by a largely working-class constituency made up of the delegates to the annual congress of the ANC.

The ANC thus became unique among African nationalist movements in that it came under the strong influence of the urban working class. This was in marked contrast with similar organisations elsewhere in Africa which continued to be dominated by intellectuals and the middle class throughout the period of their struggle for independence and also beyond, into the era of independence.

The one group that the apartheid regime singled out for repression among the middle class was the African businessmen. Among the measures the government took to discourage the growth of African business in the urban areas were the following: the plot on which an African could set up business was limited to an area scarcely bigger than that of a matchbox township house; the businessman was not allowed to own more than one business nor was he allowed to form partnerships or companies. If a businessman wished to expand his business activities, he was given the option of doing so in the Bantustans. The Bantu Investment Corporation, which was established to finance African business, would only extend loans to those who operated in the Bantustans. It lured those who appeared to be running successful small businesses by offering them loans to open in the Bantustans or to take up overpriced businesses which had been owned by whites whom the government was removing from the Bantustans to the so-called white areas of South Africa.

Perhaps the first prominent intellectual to step down from the leadership of the ANC in the 1950s was Dr Moroka, a wealthy medical doctor from a well-known aristocratic family from Thaba `Nchu in the Orange Free State. Moroka had been promoted by the leaders of the ANC Youth League to take over the presidency of the ANC in 1949 from Dr Xuma, who did not come up to scratch on the finer points of African nationalism, the favoured philosophy of the Youth League. At the end of the Defiance Campaign, Moroka fell foul of the ANC because he insisted on

pursuing a line of defence in court that tended to undermine the militant posture of the organisation. He had to give up the presidency and was replaced by Chief Albert Luthuli.

The intellectuals who remained in the ANC in significant numbers were concentrated in a faction known as the Africanists. This was the group led by Robert Sobukwe, Potlako Leballo, Peter Raboroko and Z. B. Molete, amongst others, who in 1958 broke away from the ANC to form the Pan-Africanist Congress. This group, however, was not active in the ANC, and after the Defiance Campaign it adopted the role of professional critic of ANC policies and was not involved in confronting the government. Another group of African intellectuals prominent in this period was comprised of the journalists associated with Drum, Golden City Post and Bantu World. These were also critics of the ANC and yet were themselves not members. They argued that a journalist should not belong to a political party as that would destroy his or her objectivity.

The one organ of the ANC where the working class was strongest was the Women's League. In many respects, the 1950s was a decade of women in South Africa. African working-class women came out of the kitchen and took their rightful place as leaders of the African community. The names of leading women who came to prominence during these years included Lilian Ngoyi, Florence Matomela, Frances Baard, Annie Silinga and Dorothy Nyembe, to name but a few. These women transformed the Women's League into a fighting arm of the national liberation movement. In the past the Women's League had been led by the wives of the professionals who were leaders of the ANC. There was a marked difference between these urban working-class women and their counterparts in the peasantry in that, except in a few cases such as in the western Transvaal where women were involved in the liberation struggle, peasant women on the whole were not politically active.

It is therefore one of the ironies of history that the National Party, in trying to defend and protect white minority privileges by cracking down on those whom it perceived as its biggest threat, in reality succeeded only in digging its own grave.

Charting a New Course

At the end of the Defiance Campaign, the ANC found itself faced with a government that intended to destroy not only the ANC but all opposition by African organisations. In the climate of fear and uncertainty even white liberals were affected to the extent that they found themselves adopting in practice positions indicated by the government. Even the liberal municipal council of Port Elizabeth, which had not imposed pass laws, was frightened out of its wits when in October 1952 an event sparked off by the unthinking behaviour of a white constable took

place at the New Brighton police station. As workers returned home from work, a policeman saw an African carrying a tin of paint and immediately assumed that the tin had been stolen. He stopped him and attempted to arrest him and in the scuffle that ensued he shot the man dead. This action immediately set off a riot, which resulted in the death of four whites and seven Africans, while a number were wounded.

The city of Port Elizabeth thereafter introduced a night curfew, which was applied even more rigorously than had been the case in Bloemfontein, Pretoria or Johannesburg. No African was allowed in the streets of Port Elizabeth after ten o'clock. Further meetings of the ANC which had attracted weekly open-air rallies of 20000-30000 were banned. This resulted in the implementation of the M-plan in the area from 1953 onwards, thus introducing it to underground methods of organisation. It had become clear that in order to face this new situation the ANC had to chart a new course of struggle which was not based on the old defensive approaches. For instance, the boycott of consumer products, which was to be one of the effective methods of struggle during the fifties, started with the boycott of oranges in Port Elizabeth. This was designed to put pressure on the citrus-growing farmers along the Sundays River valley to treat their workers fairly. The pattern for such consumer boycotts was set when the representatives of the citrus industry settled with the executive of the ANC and the boycott, which had resulted in the Port Elizabeth market being flooded with unsold oranges, was called off.

Following the end of the Defiance Campaign came yet another major event which would influence the course of the struggle for national liberation for the next two decades. Those whites who could not find a political home in the white political parties were, with the assistance of the ANC, advised to form a new organisation the Congress of Democrats (COD) - at about the same time that the South African Coloured People's Organisation (SACPO), later called Coloured People's Congress (CPC), was formed. The four Congresses representing Africans, Coloureds, Indians and whites together formed the Congress Alliance. At the head of this alliance was the ANC. The formation of the Congress Alliance represented an advance.

Previously each of these bodies had operated in defence of the particular group it represented. Now they realised that they all had one thing in common, that in spite of differences in their oppression, they were all oppressed. As such they agreed to work together in an alliance to fight against oppression. This was a significant stage in the development of the struggle for national liberation; for in all the campaigns that followed the formation of the alliance, both the planning and execution of decisions were decided at a meeting of the joint executives of the Congresses.

As a result of the passing of an amendment to the Industrial Conciliation Act, which separated Coloureds and Indians from whites, a new federation of trade unions was formed. This was the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), which, in

opposition to the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA), supported the policies of the Congress Alliance.

The Congress Alliance lost no time in setting up machinery that would allow it to chart a new course - a course that would enable it to take initiatives of its own on a battlefield of its own choice. One of its most momentous decisions was to organise a congress where the people of this country would forge together a policy instrument embracing the aspirations of all South Africans. After collecting the demands of the people both in urban and in rural areas, the Congress of the People met in 1955 to adopt an all-embracing policy document - The Freedom Charter.

After the Freedom Charter had been adopted by the members of the Congress Alliance, it became the policy document of each and all of them. Of course not everybody agreed with everything in the Freedom Charter. There was some debate, especially in the ANC in Natal, about three of the clauses, which members thought contentious. The three clauses that were troublesome were 'The people shall govern'; 'The mineral wealth below the soil, the banks and monopoly industry shall be transferred to the ownership of the people as a whole,; and 'The land shall be shared among those who work it'. The main objection to the clause 'The people shall govern, came from those who believed that there should be a qualified franchise that excluded illiterate people. The objection to the nationalisation clause came from people who thought that policies which moved away from 'free enterprise, would threaten the viability of the South African economy. The objection to the land reform clause came in particular from landowners, who feared that their landed property would be confiscated.

All these objections were, however, not brought to the national congress because the people who raised them in Natal were anxious to distance themselves from the Africanists, who had latched onto the same points in order to attack the ANC and accuse it of being socialistic. The deal that was struck was that in return for the objectors not raising their disagreements in congress, the supporters of the Freedom Charter in Natal would in turn not reveal that there were disagreements in their province about the Freedom Charter.

The Congress Alliance, now guided by this great policy document, embarked on probing attacks - sometimes of shorter and sometimes of longer duration, both at home and internationally. As soon as the government introduced Bantu education, the ANC reacted by calling for a national boycott. This move met with serious problems. Firstly, the government hit back by harassing open-air classes and threatened churches that allowed their halls to be used for running such classes, which were illegal under the Bantu Education Act. But the major problem was that those parents who were eager for the education of their children did not by and large support the boycott. Bad as Bantu education was, it was felt that the children

should be able to acquire reading skills, although examination results in the open-air ANC schools were good and the children were also taught about the struggle for liberation. The boycott could not be sustained for a long time and it was therefore called off.

A series of consumer boycotts took place in the fifties mostly in support of workers, demands. The most effective boycott was that of potatoes during 1959. The shocking conditions under which African farm workers, especially in the eastern Transvaal, worked were exposed by newspapers such as New Age. The ANC immediately called for a boycott of potatoes, and as the markets experienced a glut, farmers started selling the potatoes in the reserves at low prices but even that gave them very little relief.

Yet another significant boycott was that of a newspaper. The Eastern Province Herald issued every week a special issue which was circulated only in the townships of Port Elizabeth. The issue dealt with social and sport activities in the African townships and used Africans who were clerks in the Native Administration offices as reporters. The ANC objected to this on the ground that it was a discriminatory practice on the part of the newspaper to distribute that issue only in the townships. It called upon the paper to stop the special edition for the township, and when it refused to do so a boycott was called of the paper. Within days the management of the paper apologised, giving the assurance that it would not issue this special edition again.

After the government started implementing in earnest the Bantu Authorities Act, the representative of the Ciskei paramount chief in Port Elizabeth, together with her councillors who were mostly members of the local Advisory Board, organised a function to raise funds to build offices for the paramount chief in the Ciskei. Now that the status of the paramount chief, who had for years been demoted to the level of headman, had been raised to that of a recognised chief under the Bantu Authorities Act, the government decided to put up offices in the Ciskei from which it would implement the Bantu Authorities Act. In terms of this Act, the government divided Africans along tribal lines, called 'nations'. Each of the chiefs at the head of such a 'nation' was allowed to have an 'ambassador' in the main industrial centres in the country so that the tribal divisions which the government had established in the rural areas would be carried over into the urban areas. In the new townships, certain areas were divided along tribal lines, as was the case in parts of Soweto in Johannesburg.

The ANC approached the representative of the Ciskei paramount chief to express its disapproval of the campaign to raise funds in the Port Elizabeth townships to build offices for the Bantu Authorities. But the Ciskei representative disregarded this request and proceeded to raise money from industry and commerce among the

whites to provide a feast for township people during the fund-raising campaign. A festival was also organised at which a beauty contest of nurses from the local hospital and various tribal dancing groups were to feature.

On the eve of this festival, the ANC issued leaflets throughout the townships of Port Elizabeth on a door-to-door basis, calling upon the people and the dancing groups to keep away from the festivities. It also distributed a leaflet at the hospital, dissuading the nurses from attending the beauty contest. Only the organisers of the fund-raising campaign turned up for the feast. The ANC then turned on the chief organiser, who was employed by a tea-packing firm as its salesman in the townships. It issued a leaflet calling upon all the township shops not to stock the products of the tea firm. It also posted a copy of this leaflet to the firm, which immediately threatened to dismiss the salesman for involving himself in Bantu Authorities politics to the detriment of the business. If the firm had done so, the salesman would have faced the prospect of being endorsed out of the city once he had lost his job. This man, who had arrogantly treated the ANC, was back within a few days at the ANC offices to apologise. The ANC in turn demanded a hundred reams of duplicating paper, two boxes of stencils, and half-a-dozen tubes of ink to enable it to call off the boycott.

Another significant boycott was that of buses in Port Elizabeth in 1958. The bus drivers and conductors of the PE Tramways, which operated a bus service between the African townships and the city, had agreed to form a workers' committee under the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act. One morning the workers expressed their dissatisfaction with both wages and working conditions by embarking on a go-slow strike, which resulted in commuters arriving late for work. By midday there was a complete stoppage of work. The workers' committee then approached the offices of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) for advice. Consequently a joint committee of the workers' committee and SACTU representatives sought to establish a link with the management of the bus company; the latter, however, was not prepared to meet them.

The bus company proceeded to employ scab labour to keep the service running. It was at this point that the ANC intervened, calling upon the people in the township to boycott the scab-labour-driven buses. The boycott continued for more than a month before management gave in to pressures by both industry and commerce to enter into negotiations with the workers. The dispute was finally resolved when management and workers agreed to set up a tribunal.

The boycott campaigns of the 1950s had some important lessons. Firstly, employers in industry and commerce got to know that even though African workers were denied the right to organise trade unions, the ANC would not allow them to be exploited. Secondly, the traders in the African townships and in the white towns

and cities who depended on African consumer support were taught the lesson that they could not disregard the decisions of the ANC on matters that affected the community. Thirdly, the masses of the African people, especially in the urban areas, saw in the ANC an unflinching organisation that fought uncompromisingly for their rights. This gained increasing support for the ANC in both urban and rural areas.

Dissenting Voices

The early 1950s were a period of intense mass mobilisation. However, each time the ANC came up with a move, the government responded with an even bigger counter-move. In this escalating contest, the ANC had to broaden its base of friends and supporters in order to increase its own muscle. This necessitated building alliances with other organisations and with other races. It should be remembered that ANC membership was open only to Africans at this time. The Congress of Democrats, for example, was the brainchild of the ANC, formed from among the white members of the banned Communist Party who wanted to continue co-operating with the ANC but could not do so as individual members. The 1950s, therefore, was a period when new structures and new alliances were established to fight apartheid.

Some hard-line elements within the ANC Youth League felt unhappy about the decision by the ANC to enter jointly into campaigns with non-Africans. Although they had tolerated the fact that the Defiance Campaign was a joint venture of the ANC and the SAIC, antipathy was expressed more strongly by these elements when the Congress Alliance was formed. They also received support from the Liberal Party, which claimed that the ANC was led by white communists.

The Liberal Party was formed in 1953 at a time when the government was launching its most vicious attacks against the ANC and its allies, destroying what was left of any democratic rights the African might once have enjoyed. In the face of all these oppressive measures, the Liberal Party concerned itself with keeping communists from taking an active part in leading the ANC in the struggle against national oppression. Its leading scribe and exponent, Patrick Duncan, claimed that the ANC leadership was being manipulated by white communists in the Congress of Democrats or by the Indian Congress. Exponents of liberalism even to this day trot out the story that the ANC leadership consists of communists who are out 'to seize, in the holy name of the people, all the assets of the Anglo American Corporation, General Mining, First National Bank, Volkskas ...3

After the conference of African leaders at the end of 1960, the Liberal Party worked feverishly to pull both the Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC) and the African section of the Liberal Party out of the conference resolution to organise for an All-In Conference, which was to be held in March 1961 in Pietermaritzburg. Jordan

Ngubane, then National Vice-President of the Liberal Party, who had been instructed at the conference to make arrangements for a venue for the proposed All-In Conference, did not do so, and the delegates had to make arrangements for the venue when they got there. Neither the PAC nor the Liberal Party attended; and at a subsequent trial of the steering committee which had been elected at the conference, the PAC and the Liberal Party members, accused jointly with members of the ANC, denied the allegations and claimed that the leaflets and pamphlets (exhibits in the case) which had been made in preparation for the All-In African Conference, had been issued by Duma Nokwe and the co-accused ANC members. But in spite of that, all thirteen co-accused were sentenced to twelve months, imprisonment.

The Africanists

By the time the Congress Alliance was formed, most of the members of the ANC Youth League who still clung to the orthodox ideas of exclusive African nationalism found it difficult to accept the Freedom Charter. At the special conference of the ANC in 1956 at which the Freedom Charter was adopted as the ANC's basic policy document, members who were to constitute the leadership of the PAC objected, especially against the clauses 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it', and 'The land shall be shared among those who work it'. To them this was tantamount to selling a birthright, as the land could not be shared with non-Africans. At the 1957 conference they opposed the adoption of a new constitution, claiming that the clause 'membership shall be opened to all' meant that non-Africans could become members of the ANC.

When the Treason Trial took place towards the end of 1956, almost all the known leadership of the ANC at all levels of its structure were thrown into jail. In the Transvaal, a decision had been taken on both the national and provincial levels not to hold the annual elections in order to show the government that the people continued to have confidence in their elected leaders, in spite of their arrest. But there were strong elements amongst the membership, especially in Orlando East and Sophiatown, that insisted that the election be held. Incidentally the leaders of this campaign were the Africanists who were later to constitute the leaders of the Pan-Africanist Congress. At the 1957 national conference of the ANC, they tried hard to get conference to rule that the decision taken by the former Provincial Executive Committee with the support of the working committee of the National Executive should be declared unconstitutional. After a sharp debate lasting the whole night, the speaker (this writer) ruled that elections for the office-bearers of the province should take place within three months as from the beginning of 1958. After trying hard to take over the leadership of the ANC at the provincial level, the Africanists were defeated at the elections. From then on, they set about organising

to break away with as many members as they could to form the Pan-Africanist Congress towards the end of 1959.

The defeat of the Africanists in open elections holds important lessons for those who think they can ride to power in South Africa on a wave of racial hatred against the so-called non-African peoples of this country. It also holds important lessons for many pro-capitalist and anti-socialist forces that are being aided and abetted by foreign powers today. The three centuries of racism and racial oppression of blacks by whites have failed to transform blacks in this country into racial bigots. In South Africa racism remains, therefore, a white man's ideology and those blacks who over the years have thought they could adopt it and use it against other races, be they Coloureds, Indians or whites, have failed to get the support of the overwhelming majority of the black people.

Several generations of African intellectuals have made strenuous efforts to try to change this way of thinking among the black people of South Africa but have failed. Some of the leaders of the ANC Youth League tried this approach in the 1940s and failed. The Africanists of the 1950s and the Black Consciousness advocates of the 1970s continued this tradition among African intellectuals. This tradition - let us call it 'black exclusivism' presents a misguided solution.

As far back as the 1930s, students at Fort Hare, Lovedale and Healdtown, in their frustration with the (then) ANC leadership, attributed their lack of dynamism to the 'bad influence' of white missionaries on African intellectuals. The students argued that the influence of the missionaries helped to dampen the nationalistic fervor of African intellectuals, who were transformed into confused and hapless black Englishmen who did not share the inner feelings of the black people. These inner feelings were presumed to be anti-white.

When teachers at these centres failed to play an active part in opposing the Hertzog Bills in 1936, the students saw their thesis confirmed. It was argued that the teachers, Africanness had been diluted by the study of English and Ethics, subjects allegedly dear to white missionaries. To overcome this apathy of black intellectuals it was thus thought necessary to shake off the influence not only of white missionaries but also of communists, be they black, white, Coloured or Indian, as these were also said to dilute Africanness through their theories of class society. The notion of social class was offensive to the youth because it was thought to contribute to dividing the African people, who were presumed to be a homogeneous mass.

These youthful intellectuals-to-be had no difficulty concluding that the salvation of the African or black people lay in opposing the white missionaries and white liberals

on one hand and the communists of whatever complexion on the other. The black man was called upon to stand on his own without being supported by whites.

Realising the role which the African working class had begun to play in the national liberation struggle through their trade unions, the PAC launched the Federation of Free African Trade Unions (FOFATUSA) to compete with SACTU, which supported the policies of the Congress Alliance. This parallels the clumsy efforts by Inkatha to form UWUSA to counter COSATU, which supports the national democratic struggle. Both these counter-revolutionary federations scarcely made any progress and the former quickly disappeared.

As opposed to the inclusive African nationalism espoused by the ANC, which recognised that the Africans, Coloureds, Indians and whites had all made South Africa their home, Potlako Leballo - one of the leading members of the PAC - declared that his organisation would sweep the whites into the sea. Hendrik Verwoerd had also sworn that the National Party would push all Africans out of the 'white areas back into the Native Reserves'. A strange similarity between the two exclusive nationalisms - African and Afrikaner nationalism.

What has characterised all groups that claimed to be opposed to government policies - groups that either broke away from the ANC like the PAC, or others like the Liberal Party, Unity Movement (NEUM), Inkatha and Black Consciousness Movement - has been that instead of opposing the government directly, they have mounted campaigns aimed at thwarting those initiated by the ANC. It was in line with this behaviour pattern that after the last legal conference of the ANC on 16 December 1959 had resolved to embark on an anti-pass campaign to start on 31 March 1960, the newly formed PAC decided to forestall this by launching its own antipass campaign on 21 March 1960. When the police reacted by mowing down with machine-guns no less than 69 people at Sharpeville who out of curiosity had come to witness the handful of PAC members hand over their passes to the police, it was the ANC that stepped in, to turn the event against the government. It called within three days for a national stay-at-home to mark a day of mourning. Fearful of an uprising, the government made mass arrests of political activists, especially within the Congress Alliance, during the night of 31 December 1960 and declared a State of Emergency, and banned both the ANC and PAC.

At the meeting of the National Executive of the ANC at which the decision to declare a day of mourning was taken, it was also resolved that in the event of the government banning the ANC, it would not dissolve. The groundwork for setting up machinery for illegal operations was also laid. The following steps were taken:

- a. Parts of the constitution were to be suspended in order to bring about a more efficient mode of operation suited to underground activities. To streamline the

cumbersome structures, the provincial level was discarded, leaving the national, regional and the branch levels.

- b. In place of the National Executive, a seven-man committee were appointed to direct the struggle.
- c. Both the Youth League and Women`s League, which had enjoyed a measure of autonomy, would be dissolved and replaced by five-person advisory committees working directly under the seven-man committee at the branch level.

After the State of Emergency was lifted on 31 August 1960, it became clear that the organisation had been thrown into a state of disarray. It was to address this problem that the national seven-man committee decided to call a meeting of African leaders to chart a new course of struggle. An indication of the turn which the struggle was going to take was given at the All-In Conference in March 1961, where a resolution was put to the conference and adopted, calling upon the government not to unilaterally declare South Africa as a Republic and to call a national convention of all the people of South Africa to draw up a new constitution which would embrace all its people. The resolution went further to say that if the government disregarded this call, the National Action Committee appointed at that conference would call for a three-day stay-at-home to take place from 29 to 31 May 1961, after which the people would embark on a course of non-co-operation.

For the sensitive observer this resolution should have been a pointer to the shape which the struggle was going to take. At a meeting of the joint executives of the Congress Alliance in June 1961, the situation was reviewed and a decision was taken that in all future stay-at-homes, the possibility of the use of force could not be excluded.

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